



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

<http://finance.senate.gov>

For Immediate Release
Monday, December 13, 2004

Contact: Liz Fowler
202-224-4515

Statement of Senator Max Baucus on the Nomination of Mike Leavitt to Lead U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, today expressed praise for the nomination of Mike Leavitt to head the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, while reiterating concerns over the Administration's stance on Medicaid. The Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over Medicaid, Medicare, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and welfare, will also have jurisdiction over Leavitt's nomination.

Mike Leavitt has served as Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency since his confirmation by the Senate in November 2003. Prior to leading the EPA, Leavitt served as Governor of Utah for ten years, including a term as Chairman of the National Governors Association.

"Mike Leavitt has a reputation for fairness, for seeking consensus, and for promoting principles of cooperation," Baucus said. "I look forward to working with Administrator Leavitt as Congress prepares to tackle important health care challenges facing the nation and Montana, including the significant challenges facing the residents of Libby, Montana." Libby became the focus of national attention in 1999, after reports linked asbestos contamination from a mine near town to the deaths of about 200 people in the area. Leavitt made a brief visit to Libby in August 2004.

While Baucus praised Leavitt's reputation as a consensus-builder, he noted concern over the Administration's tendency for broad waiver authority in Medicaid, the federal-state health insurance program for low-income Americans. "For the past two years, I have raised questions about the troubling direction this Administration has taken in granting waivers that undermine the fundamental nature of Medicaid. And while many governors have sought waiver authority under Medicaid, in some respects, the Utah waiver has laid the groundwork for the Administration's current path."

During his term as Utah Governor, Leavitt proposed an ambitious health care reform agenda and was instrumental in developing and advocating for the state's Medicaid waiver, which provides limited health coverage for new populations while reducing benefits for some populations already covered under the program.

"I expect that Administrator Leavitt will bring the same thoughtful leadership and moderate approach to running HHS that he has demonstrated at EPA. I am also interested to

learn more about the position he plans to take on Medicaid waivers, and on Medicaid financing generally, when he appears before the Finance Committee.”

Leavitt’s nomination is subject to confirmation in the full Senate after hearings in the Senate Finance Committee.

Highlights of Mike Leavitt’s biography: born February 11, 1951, bachelor’s degree in economics and business from Southern Utah University; president and CEO, The Leavitt Group, a regional insurance firm; chairman, Southern Utah University Board of Trustees, 1985-89; member, Utah State Board of Regents, 1989-92; elected gov. of Utah, 1992, served through 2003; administrator, EPA, Nov. 2003 to present; Married to Jacalyn S. Leavitt; five children.

###